



A
BRIEF HISTORY
OF
PARSEES

By

S. H. JHABVALA

[Author of Kabir: Prince of
Peace: Prince of Light: Beads
of Amber: Catechism on
Zoroastrionism, etc., etc.,]

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PREFACE

The whole world with its diverse races, has changed and is still rapidly changing. Each one earnestly desires to know the past and present of the other — history, science, religion, etc. — India, in fact, is rebuilding a new social organism after her Independence, and her castes and communities, by a common mixture, are evolving a fresh culture. When her political, economic, and social evolution was suppressed by the forces of Time, the Parsees held the lead and opened up channels of freedom, other vast races and communities accepting it willingly to their own advantage. Not only the new generations in India, but also the new peoples of both Asia and Europe, therefore, must know something about the past of the Parsees and their present. And they must know quickly and briefly, for modern moments are briefer than used to be — the bullock-cart having been replaced by the jet-plane.

The present book is, accordingly, written to serve a modern purpose and fulfil a need the rapid times demand. It should be a permanent and coveted possession with the youth of the Parsee community, indeed, for no world-knowledge could be complete or even effectively helpful with our youth unless its own foundations are deep-laid in the knowledge of their own heritage. The Parsee that knows and perhaps emulates Akbar and Elizabeth, surely, must know first about Shahpoor and Naosherwan. The non-Parsee will find Persian historical characters worthy of emulation, only if he knew about them.

The present book lays no pretensions to exhaustiveness in any direction historically to be treated. It attempts to suggest that the Parsee too, is a valued part of the component whole, and that therefore, his whole history must be agreeably known, appreciated, and his deserving place in the growing fabric should be worthily accorded to him.

The genesis of the book has a back-ground in my respectful friendship with that silent social servant and notable businessman—Mr. Dinshaw Beheram Irani, a noble son of his com-

munity and a nobler one of his native country. To him mere theoretic talking about service to the community, service to the country, is highly disagreeable, in the spirit of the late Dinshaw Mehrwan Irani and the late Dinshaw Jeejeebhoy Irani of pious memory, who three decades ago rendered great literary service to the Parsee community. Dinshaw Beheram asked me and then encouraged me to write this Brief History of the Parsees.

To such a good Parsee the reader will tender his gratitude for the publication of this small book, as I do while sending it for print. That, Dinshaw rightly deems, is a practical phase of his service to others.

Author.

Khar, Bombay.

A Brief History Of Parsees

Today's man is a product of thousands of years of progress and civilisation. In the north of modern Iran there are the Pamirs, supposed to be the roof of the world in very ancient times. Tall, fair-eyed, muscular Aryans descended from here over Iran...Aryamem Vaejo-Iranvej...Arya Vrutta...centuries ago.

Gayomard ... Gayemaretan ... the first among civilised Aryans, implanted his banner of conquest on the soil of Iran. He founded what later came to be known as the Peshdadian dynasty of rulers of Iran, beginning with Hushang. The country then was not small as it is today, like the palm of our hand. It extended far beyond Asia Minor to the west and Kashmir and beyond to the east. Man had then to co-operate with nature for securing his food and clothing, and raising shelter for his protection. Today, man seeks to master nature by the force of science, so advanced has been the human mind. The Peshdadians tilled the land with rude, pointed instruments, and when it rained, they bent their knees to some unknown Higher Power, they saw in the rising sun or the setting moon in thankful reverence for sending rain which, to them curious enough, helped to grow various sorts of eatables. They scoured streams and rivulets, sitting on curved floating planks of wood. They also rode on horse-back, milked cows and buffaloes, and tamed dogs to watch their rude cottages—these three inseparable friends of mankind.

PESHADIANS—LAW GIVERS

Hushang the first Law-giver, accidentally struck a flint-stone against another, and lo, sparks of fire fell on the grass close by. Flames of fire thus originated with man—fire that gave light at night and cooked food for our forefathers. The Peshdadians observed the day of invention of fire with Jashan celebrations. The occasion is observed down till the present day with great eclat among all the Persians. It is commonly termed "Jashan-e-Saddeh". The people in Iran are changed, with Islam as their state religion and Muslim as their way of common life; yet this official celebration has been enjoined in Persia by the Muslim rule there continuing down till today.

So deep is the ineffaceable feeling for fire at the place of its first birth. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the animals of the land provided man with food, for their flesh was roasted in the lighted fire and eaten with relish.

Jamsheed was the greatest among all Peshdadians, for he was devoted to the pursuit of the highest and the best in human mind. He introduced the plough for cultivation, pots for cooking and candle-lights for lighting the thatch-roofed huts in which the populace of the time lived. Iranians in those days dwelt in scattered villages; cities had not yet been born. Jamsheed laid down rural roads for transport by carts drawn by bullocks and buffaloes. It is also recorded that he introduced a system of education among the people, of which the different classes took advantage. He divided his people into four classes, like what Manu, the Indian philosopher later did; i.e. socially he split mankind into:—1. Athravans; 2. Rathesh-tars; 3. Vastariyolsh; and 4. Hutokshas. This corresponds to Manu's division of Aryans into:—Brahmans, Kshatriyas-warriors, Vaishnavas, meaning traders, and Untouchables doing the lower functions of society. It should be noteworthy that since the times of Jamshed everywhere on the globe, man belongs to either the one or the other group out of those that Jamsheed devised in ages gone by. Each section to his allotted task was Jamsheed's command to his people, so that the state could be prosperous, and people happy.

Jamsheed thereafter engaged himself in pursuit of science and wisdom. Peace and contentment at home always breed a desire for mental culture; and though there were no means to pursue scholarship, Jamsheed consulted Nature and her children, such as the sun and the stars, and devised a code of scientific thinking which has been down till the modern times imitated by advanced science and philosophy. On study of Nature, he found that the day and night were equal in length of time on March 21st, that all nature wore a new appearance on that day and thenceforward, that ice melted away and earth wore a fresh garb of a delightful newness of life. That occasion was named Jamsheed's Naoraze—a festival observed all over the globe down till the present day, where equality of day and night has passed into a belief. Jamsheed's discovery led to the introduction of a regular calendar accepted by later astronomers of a civilised world.

The monarch who had spiritual correspondence with the etherial system advanced deeper along the path. To him is attributed the invention of the celebrated "Jam-e-Jehan-Numa", meaning a glass pitcher exhibiting the whole world, by which he saw and read into the secrets of nature. He even fore-told astrological truths. How could such a prince of power and plenty not experience peace and prosperity in the land of his rule?

To him is also assigned the privilege of first finding home-made wine, commonly used for medicinal purposes—wine made out of green grapes that he stored in a jar, which when dissolved by the hand of time resulted in luscious effective medicine drunk in time of sickness, as did Jamsheed's maid-servant cure herself when she caught incurable head-ache. Later peoples of the world made such wine a daily draught in the even-time as a remedy against all ailments and fatigue of the body and of the mind. It continues down till the present day though ages have gone by since Jamsheed first invented it. In the latter days of Jamsheed's reign invasions were made by savage, uncivilised tribes from north-east and east, led by Zuhhak, the son of Mirtas, who was known, as Firdausi the great poet, records, for his tyrannous nature. Jamsheed was too mighty a monarch to fall: verily, it has been wisely said by saints and philosophers, "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty temper before a fall". Jamsheed in later time of his life proclaimed himself to be the god of all nations; and the humble people bowed low before him; yet the God of all creatures reduced him to dust at the hand of a low human being Zuhhak—about whom it is related that he carried two snakes grown over his shoulders, which daily needed two human brains to sustain themselves. Physiologically, the story seems rather to be untrue; but it has its imperishable moral, namely that his evil treatment of the good and the faithful retorted itself in physical deformity to himself and in wretchedness to all who had the misfortune to live in his ugly reign. "Honi soit qui mal y pense", says a French proverb—"Evil to him who evil thinks"; and the powers that ever rule human deeds reacted upon Zuhhak too. He fell and died a miserable death as is shown below. Ere this, Jamsheed died, and for a time there reigned chaos in Iran. The royal family

made its abode in far away mountains. Then arose a popular rustic farmer leader, Kaveh by name—who, like Wat Tyler the English leader of revolt against King Richard, raised the banner of opposition against Zuhhak. That was the famous "Darfsh-e-Kavyani" that continued with the Persians for long, long years, until our empire was extinguished when the last Sassanian prince, Yazdegerd III fell at the hand of the Arab conquerors. Kaveh sought the military assistance of Fariddun a remnant of Jamsheed's family, and they both extirpated Zuhhak, in honour of which the Persians celebrated "Jashan-e-Meherangan." It continued in Iran for a long time.

Fariddun was anointed prince of Iran, and he spread his conquests far and wide till all the lost territory was re-acquired. Besides Kaveh, Iran produced great heroes like Sam, Nariman, and Kershasp and Zall, whose glorious deeds fill the lustrous pages of our first history. Domestic disputes terminated Fariddun's brilliant career. The above powerful warriors whose list can be complete only with the inclusion of the renowned Rustam, the illustrious son of the above Zall, filled the pages of royal history during the dying days of the Peshdadian dynasty. Iraj, Manucheher, Naudar, Zoo, successively passed like shadows on the map of Iran; and these immortal warriors defended the country against devastating attacks of another anti-Iranian foe—Afrasiab—who terrorised the land for a number of years. Rustam the brave, rode his mighty Raksh, and lifted his ponderous mace, and kept at bay the savage Afrasiab and his rude tribe of Turanians. With the death of Zoo, the Peshdadian sun set, leaving Rustam alone in the field to save the glory and pursue the continuity of the crown of Iran.

KAYANIANS

The Kayas-Kavis—the tribe of the holy men, lived in Alburz, a mountainous region. They were descendants of the last of the Peshdadians. Kobad, the chief of them all, was brought out by Rustam from the hills as the lawful successor to the throne. Kobad, Zall and Rustam led the way of battle against Afrasiab, with Mehrab, the king of Kabul, Gushteham, the son of Naudar, Karam and Kishwad arrayed to the right, the left and the centre. Afrasiab wielded his heavy mace

against the Iranians in company with Akbas and Garsivaz. The grave battle resulted in victory for the Iranians, and Kobad happily ruled the land in peace and plenty for a number of years. The days of Kai Kaus, his successor, passed in fighting and bringing under control the numerous marauding tribes round about his territory, called Mazandaran—a term which we use today for mischievous lads. Rustam alone could bring them to their knees. He performed the Seven Labours like what Hercules the Greek hero did in later times. Kaus stretched his conquest as far as modern Europe and Africa. The Iranians in those antique days were a civilising force, and whatever peoples they subdued were brought by them within the pale of advanced thought and feeling. Unto Rustam, the prince was so indebted that he dowered him with the honour of "Jehan Pehelwan", i.e. World Hero. Kaus advanced the meteorological science from where Jamsheed had left; he invented the balloon and founded a Meteorological institution first in the whole world.

The world constantly passes through a process of evolution. Just as the new becomes the old, the old too, turns the wheel and becomes new in old. The aeroplane of today was known to the ancients. Even the Hindu epics sing of these means of travel by air.

But while Kaus was pursuing the paths of knowledge and science, his brave general Rustam was passing through a romance. Rustam married Tehemina the daughter of prince of Samangan, and while parting with her for his favourite martial pursuits, he dowered her with an insignia to be tied around the arm of the child if it was a male. Indeed, a son was born to Tehemina, Sohrab by name, brave and stalwart like the father himself. Father and son not knowing each other met in the field of battle from opposite sides; and it was only when Rustam chanced to see the armlet tied to Sohrab's arm while the latter was breathing his last that the father realised the gravest mistake of his life in thrusting his poniard in his own dear son's heart during the fateful fight. Then Rustam pined and died of sore remorse.

Iran now suffered from internal dissensions, and Kai Siyavush passed an uneventful period except that he performed a unique miracle of going through fire to prove his inno-

cence in regard to a scandal in which his enemies involved him with Sudabeh his step-mother. Warriors Geev, Toos, and Gudarz held military power over Iran now; and after Siyavush's death, rivalry ensued between Fariburz the son of Kaus and Khusrau the son of Siyavush, in which Toos and Gudarz took opposite sides. At last, Kai Khusrau's claims were recognised according to Iranian dynastic traditions. Khusrau engaged himself in battles against Iran's enemies led by the descendents of Afrasiyab, whom he drove away across the borders of China, long ago known to our ancestors. Khusrau was a prince devoted to the pursuit of God as one unity; he destroyed idol-worship, and founded the day of "Adar Gushasp" in honour of his conquest of Behman Dazh or the fort of Behman. He extended his territory so as to cover Turan, the ancestral opponent of Iran. He tended the poor and the sick, and nursed and educated orphans and widows. He was so deeply given up to God that it is said of him that he disappeared in thin air on the lake-side of Chaychaste—modern Kaspien, where he used to sit absorbed in prayer. Legend quotes his revival like that of King Arthur of Britain.

The last Karyanian, Gushtasp, is immortalised by the advent of Zarathushtra, for during his reign Zarathushtra founded the religion of Purity and gave a new turn of life and thought to humanity. Gushtasp converted to Zarathushtra's faith, gave a great impetus to the spread of Zoroastrian creed. The Chinese prince Arjasp and his lieutenant Bidarafsh were defeated ignominiously when they fought against Asphandiar, the son of Gushtasp, who, too, was a staunch follower of Zarathushtra. Asphandiar commonly called "Roojn-Tan" i.e. of the body as hard as bronze, passed through the same initial "labours" as Rustam did in his youth. An experienced soldier then, he suppressed his Chinese enemies—Arjasp and Kohrram. Asphandiar then hastened to secure the throne from his father Gushtasp which brought about internal disputes leading to the down-fall of the Karyanian dynasty itself. A warrior Rustam by name, shot through the only vulnerable part of Asphandiar's body, namely the eye; and his enemy Shughad trapped Rustam into his fall and ultimate death.

The Karyanians lived a romantic period in the history of Iran, and left it a well-planned sovereignty, well equipped with

various conveniences life then demanded. At the fall of the last of the Karyanians, history rambles in uncertain time. The Iranians did not change their father-land. Some of them, indeed settled under less tyrannical rulers in countries to the north and to the east; others took refuge in the adjoining territories; but all lived as true and staunch followers of the Prophet Zarathushtra, so deep-rooted was their faith in the teachings of the great seer and messenger of God. Born of Pourushasp and Doghdo, Zarathushtra early entered the stage of silence, study and meditation for 12 years in the mountain of Ushidarena and when he descended into the world, he first preached the doctrine of one God-Ahura Mazda. Zarathushtra's death at the hand of invading marauders in the sacred temple of Noosh-Adar along with eighty of his choice followers lent a strong impetus to the propagation of His faith. He taught the simplest truths with which to guard ourselves in life, such as Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds. His science was based on Asha, i.e. purity—both of the body, mind and the soul. It was a doctrine which none before Him in life had taught. It materially changed all the forces of growing civilisation, and put man along the path of personal effort to save himself from Evil (Angre Mainyush) and accept Good (Sapento Mainyush) as his passport to Heaven. Zarathushtra gave to mankind practical wisdom to live, and to enjoy an ever better life.

HAKHAMANIANS

The Parsis are an historical race. Their past is mingled with the uncertain changeable destiny of Time. They baffled Time at certain periods of their racial career. Time baffled them at others. They lived and flourished in central Asia; then extended east and west; then contracted within the area of narrow civilisation to which they did not contribute a little, and out of which modern forces of life and thought took their birth. Life marches on; Time lags behind.

When Gushtasp and Asphandiar fell, an historical cloud overwhelms the Parsi race, about which period the Shah Nameh of Firdausi and the Bundahish, a religious book come to our rescue. Later, European scholars found in their research that for an unknown period diverse classes of people swept past the geography of mid-Asia, and the Iranians sided with the changing governments, or opposed them as they found it

necessary to do for self-existence. Their struggle in favour of securing land, against the state, fills some remarkable chapters in the history of mankind. The Parsis remained a compact entity, and once again time revolved to help to make them regain their lost empire.

No race upon this earth is free from commixture with others. Blood is pure in every stage of progress; blood is universally red. After an unknown period of time arose once again the Persian Zoroastrians, Hakhamanians—Achoemenians in Greek history—by name, who survived the losses of earth by keeping firm on steadfast hold of their faith. The Greeks ere this, had planted their power on the east. The Hakhamanians proved to be their bitterest opponents. Foe met foe on an equal ground, and carvings in hills and mountains show that out of nothing that was, the great founder of the Hakhamanian dynasty created a worthy country to face the Greeks, ready to extend into an empire that was erstwhile.

CYRUS THE GREAT

Perse Gardaz, a small town in Perses-Fars was all that Cyrus possessed, out of which to build a new great state. Like most other personages of history, Cyrus nursed both his mind and his body in freedom, and at an early age, conquered not only Perses, but also the whole of the Median territory round about. War was his joy as dictated by the mastery of the age, and he readily made all sacrifices for the call made upon him. Lydia in the west was first conquered with Cappadocia on the way. Chraesus the richest man of the time considered himself to be the happiest man upon the earth for the abundance of riches he possessed. Solon the wise Greek had warned him against his pride; and when Cyrus captured all his wealth he exclaimed, "Solon, Solon, thou wast right", by which history records the greatest test of impermanency of wealth. However, Cyrus did not exercise upon him the tyranny of the age, and made him one of his closest confidantes.

Cyrus thereafter, conquered Assyria; but his remarkable conquests may be registered as those of Eonia, Eolia, Caria, and Lycia—well-built Greek states, along with some others on the coast-line of Asia. Cyrus secured, during his march homeward, Scythia and Babylonia, the most

fertile territory between the Tigris and the Euphrates. In proportion as the Babylonians loved luxury, their physique had become effeminate, and Cyrus took no time in defeating king Nabonadius, who submitted along with his son Belthazar to the more manly power of the Iranians. The Babylonians were worshippers of idols of planets like Jupiter and Juno, borrowed from the ideology of the Greeks. Cyrus discouraged such idol worship and spread the cause of Zoroastrianism. Xenophon the Greek author of *Cyropaedia*, depicts Cyrus' ruling policy as generous to his foes and beneficial to his people. He did not in the spirit of fanaticism, violently suppress one creed and on its foundations of ruin, raise the fabric of another. He introduced in mid-East, what later began to be recognised as the Feudal System in European state-craft.

His successors followed in his foot-steps and Cambyses effected conquest over Egypt, where he began to be acknowledged as the "descendant of the sun." The Egyptians offered devotion to gods and goddesses specially borrowed from planetary bodies. The Iranians were pure monotheists. Hence resulted a conflict of religious ideas ending in wars, in days of yore. Ethiopia, Carthagina, and Armenia were invaded by Cambyses. Varied situations of war and peace arose for the Persians.

Domestic disturbances made the latter period of Cambyses' rule full of trouble for the country. Hystaspes the father of the great Darius Hystaspes, became the chief Satrap of Iran.

DARIUS HYSTASPES

The original Persian name of this mighty prince was Daryavush Vishtasp (B.C. 521-485). After Cambyses it was proposed by the Iranian people to establish a republic in the country; but rebellions began to arise on all sides, and a monarchical form of government had ultimately to be decided upon. Babylonia under Nebuchadnazar, Media under Zathritia, and Armenia revolted against the central authority of Persia; and later, Parthia and Hyrcania also followed suit. But these were ruthlessly suppressed by Darius, who as is evident from the inscriptions at Takhte-Bihistun in the mountains of Iran, attributes all his victories to Ahura Mazda—so pure and selfless was the spirit of the conqueror.

Darius extended his conquest as far as Punjab in India; and when he had to return to his country, owing to Babylonian once again putting up its head, against the Government of the day, he subdued on his way back, the wild countries of modern Afghanistan and Baluchistan. But the greatest achievement to the credit of Darius is in respect of his mastery of Scythia towards the south of Russia, whose people were a wandering race, and like the Egyptians, mummified their dead. That the ancient Iranians were great navigators could be evidenced from the fact that Darius crossed the Danube by a bridge of boats to step into the Scythian realm. The seven different communities under one name of Scythians combined together now to resist the onslaught of Darius, but to no avail. The Persian hero repulsed the Scythians, planted the banner of Kaveh in the soil of Europe first, and on his return subdued Thrace and Macedonia. The ancient towns of Miletus, Nexos, Sparta, Athens play a very important part in the history of human civilisation; and all of them were brought to the fore-front by the varying conquests of Darius. The great monarch also requisitioned the services of foreigners, like the Greeks. It was hard in those days for the Persians to permanently bring into submission a mighty growing people like the Greeks, and so, rebellions were not uncommon, which Darius quelled with a stern hand. Two battles—one on sea and the other on land, Plataea and Marathon, weakened the power of the Persians and elevated the prestige of the Greeks. After 36 years of distinguished rule Darius died, ruler of no less than 30 kingdoms, whose extent ranged from modern Punjab to France, and from Russia to Egypt. 30 royal princes lift his throne as indicated in the mountain carving in Bihistun near Hamadan, that depict him as "wise, glorious, peace-loving, incomparable, brave in war, etc."

Modern systems of administration appear to have their origin in Darius' scheme of government. The country was divided into so many divisions, over each of which was appointed a Satrap corresponding to a governor in the modern sense. His powers were defined as at present. Judiciary was apart from the Executive, and the king's own representatives, often his relatives supervised the working of the governors by surprise visits. To Darius goes the world credit of first organis-

ing the Postal system. He engaged the services of runners at different stages of the miles and miles of roads, which he first built in an organised manner. The king also built rest-houses for travellers on the way and charitable homes for the poor.

Never before had Iran so great and wise an administrator as Darius and that too, while he was scoring victory after victory over rebellious nations. Parallel to the Persians, arose the Greeks, both in valour and aggression upon other people of the world. The two rivalled with each other in combat and acquisition, till at last in the days of Xerxes, both land and sea forces of the combatants met each other to decide the fate of the world. No more glorious march of a conquering monarch decorates the pages of history than that of Xerxes who crossed the easternmost line cutting out Europe from Asia. On the other hand, the Greeks made mighty preparations while some of the scattered countries of the south refused to join them. Xerxes halted his cohorts at Thermopylae, a valley whose earth was soaked with the combined blood of the Persian and Greek warriors of yore. The Immortals of Xerxes with a heavy bearing of arms fought here the brave Spartans in a memorable battle. Leonidas the unquestioned leader of the disciplined army of the Spartans fell fighting the Persians in the arms of an immortal glory second to none recorded on the golden pages of patriotism.

It was repulse of the vast hordes of Xerxes, who decided to return to his native place instead of continuing an aimless fight with the Greeks. On his way back Xerxes subdued Phoenicia, Beotia, Thebes, etc.

If in the pass of Thermopylae, Leonidas and the Spartans declared a victory, the naval battle of Salamis, an island off the coast of Greece, proved a dubious success to the Greek arms. A further battle at Plataea revealed disunion and treachery in the Iranian camp, and Xerxes fell a victim to the mean ambition of Artabanus, a military officer.

The liberation of Greece inspired Egypt to follow suit, and Artaxerxes Longimanus (for he had long hands), lost Egypt and Syria. Artaxerxes, also known as Behmen in Avesta redeemed the Jews whose scriptures are full with laudations of the actions of Ahaseurus i.e. Cyrus who was the first Persian monarch to redeem Jewish temples. Media, Lydia, and

at last Egypt, too, went out of the Iranian hold. Similarly, in those changeable days the Greeks had as a result of disunity among themselves, fought long in what is known as the Peloponnesian War, and the Persians taking advantage of the split, requisitioned the services of Hoplites, the then far-famed warriors of Greece on regular hire and Ardashir Neernun won back much of the lost territory. Ardashir and his successor Darab, contended against a series of internal rebellions caused by Satraps within and non-Iranians without, in which all discredited and discomfited enemies of Iran aided in one way or another. Phillip king of Macedonia, was just then creating a strong opposition to the Persian empire as such, and he gave shelter to all disaffected traitors. Nectabenes, the king of Egypt, was one more such shelterer of the opponents of Iran, but he, as well as others, were discomfited in their vicious aims.

History at this stage takes a varied turn and there arose in Greece the immediate rival of Iran, a mighty warrior whose zealous onslaughts upon the Iranians to retrieve the fallen honour of Greece, greatly succeeded in bringing about the rapid fall of Persia. While Darius Codomanus (B.C. 336) was resisting with all his might and main, the treacheries of the Persian court, Alexander-Sikandar the great, was applying a free hand in conquering much of the lost territory of Yunan, i.e. Greece. Having won back Thrace and Illyria, he placed Attalus and Parmenio in command of the army to cross the Hellespont to enter Asia, Darius resolved to take up his post at river Granicus for it was here that Alexander also braced his shoulders to exterminate the power of the Persians. The Iranians planned a quick solution of the military entanglements and Darius ordered a series of rapid invasions upon Alexander along the Granicus.

The vast camp of the fighting foes covered the plain of Issus about two miles in breadth, with the river Pinarus flowing between the two armies. Darius offered a bitter battle, but the fates favoured the Greek monarch and Issus terminated the mighty Achaemenian dynasty.

Indomitable will was an essence of Persian character; and though defeated, Darius was never baffled in his attempt at re-conquering his lost territory. With all lost—family and private possessions—the last brave Prince of the Achaemeni-

des, recouped his lost country when Alexander invaded Egypt to glut his conquering zeal. Before Egypt, Damascus, the treasure-house of Persia, other Phoenician towns of Tyre and Gaza, became victims of Alexander's unquenched thirst for conquest and battle. Darius pitched the final battle of Iran's fate on the field of Arbella, with Mazeus commanding the Medians and the Syrians on the right and Bysus the Satrap of Bactria on the left with himself in the centre. It was great Iranian valour that resisted the Greek onslaught; but history dictates that empires fall but once in one process of time, though they may rise again in another. And Darius fell fighting. He died a treacherous death at the hand of Janushiyar, erstwhile a minister under him.

If the Greeks lowered the Persian flag, they scarce did uproot the Persian spirit of constant resistance. Alexander did not merely conquer; he burnt, he slaughtered, he razed to the earth the monuments of Persian dignity, for Son of god Jupiter Ammon as he prided himself to be, his inhuman actions brought about a heap of ruthless ruin, of Persepolis with all its Temples of fire, all its palaces, and all its wealth of science, Zoroastrian religion, and knowledge with which Iran abounded in those days of intellectual glory. But such is not the mould of which true heroes are made. Mere aggressors like Sikandar are but trailed comets on the vacant skies of inglorious and lustful passion. Alexander ruined Persia; early death seized Alexander. Eternal verities assert upon man and his deeds. Alexander perished at a short age of 36 (B.C. 323).

The Achaemenians were great as architects; they carved figures and inscriptions in mountains and hills, and made stones to recount the history of a mighty age, which down till the present day has kept alive a glorious chapter in the book of time. If the Kayanians engendered a new social life by propagating a new faith like Zoroastrianism, and spread newer schemes of thought and feeling, for a number of years, the Achaemenians infused an advanced prime of life both in art and industry, in politics and economics. They did not prevent inter-socialisation with the peoples of the territories they conquered. They waged no war of religion but of conquest to implant their forms of civilisation among humanity; and in so doing they exercised no cruelty, though none-the-less were

they determined in carrying forth a new message of the time to an ignorant and backward mankind. New military and naval arts in fighting, new methods of communications, such as roads, postal system and new devices of rural development and urban advancement were generated in the Achaemenian times, which have remained even after centuries of human progress, the fundamentals of modern art and society. Cyrus awoke to give rise to a new age: Darius was laid low not in eternal vanishment of Persian flame but to re-awaken in the same geography of the human mind under a new dynasty.

So doth turn the ceaseless wheel of man's constant destiny.

THE ASHKANIAN

Progress is the law of human life. Every moment we advance; we never retrograde. So do nations. Time causes large and deep vacuities down which nations and races descend. Then evolution throws up the same groups of humanity, with changed ideals and purposes, though with unchanged essence of the spirit. This unalterable law gripped the soul of Persia too. Soon after Alexander, a political chaos reigned supreme from the farthest end of Achaemenian conquest in the west to the farthest end of Iran in the east. Zoroastrianism held the spirit of regenerated man. But the political geography of the Persian race changed for the time being, into a new system, in which the might and suzerainty of Persia could not assert itself as in the days of yore.

In or about B.C. 256, a Parthian leader Ashk by name declared independence from the Greek rulers as far as Bactria. By faith the Ashkhanians were Zoroastrian; by social customs and manners they were largely a mixture of Greek and Roman peoples with whom they came in contact militarily. At times the Ashkhanians leant towards worship of planetary bodies, as did the Romans and the Greeks. Down till today we stand before the sun or the moon at prayer time. The founder of the Ashkhanian period gradually freed the Persians from the clutches of the Greeks by refusing to pay tribute to the Greek coffers.

Ashk's heir Tirdad, reigned for 33 years during which he captured Hircania one of the leading provinces of a decaying Greek power. His successor, Ardwan, recovered Media from

the hands of the Greek foes, who were now specially languishing at the hand of another Roman antagonist, with whom now ensued straight wars of the Ashkanians. Conquest loses itself, and then it reconquers itself. "History is a process of re-barbarisation. A people made vigorous by arduous physical conditions of life, and driven by increasing exigencies of survival leaves its native habitat, moves down upon a less vigorous people, conquers, displaces, or absorbs it." This is what happened to the Persians re-born into the Ashkanians.

After Hircania and Media, came the turn of Bactria which was wrenched away from the hands of the weakening Greeks, by Meherdad. The stream of conquest steadily pursued its onward course, and Susiana, Babylonia and Assyria fell an easy prey to the rising power of the Ashkanians, until at last, Meherdad reached the borders of Hindustan,—river Jehelum. That was the foundation of the Parthian empire,—from Euphrates in the west to the Hindukush in the east. Even Demetrius the most powerful prince of Syria fell a tributary ruler before the feet of Meherdad. He revived the Achaemenian administrative system of appointing a governor per each province paying a fixed tribute to the central coffer, with autonomy granted to each of them in all other matters. Teseophon, Ecbatana, Hecatombe, and Pylus were the principal capitals from whence he wielded the sceptre of authority. In order to ensure proper democratic forms, he founded Magistan, the first Parliamentary government, with a House of Lords and the House of Commons, who had power vested in them even to crown or dethrone monarchs. The Parthian suzerainty having been firmly established, the Romans under Pompey and later Julius Caesar, resolved to deal battle to the kings—Farhad II, Ardwan and others. In the days of Orodes, eastern Asia such as Armenia and Mesopotamia, was inflamed. Internecine struggles greatly debilitated both the rival powers, till at last Orodes was murdered, (B.C. 37).

A social revolution had already been started by the Parthian aristocracy inter-marrying with the Romans. The Farhads named above had already broken loose the social customs descending from the worn-out past. Man is anarchist by nature; he is citizen only by suggestion. A great writer has wisely said, "At every step the history of civilisation teaches us how slight and superficial a structure civilisation is, and

how precariously poised it is upon the apex of a never-extinct volcano of poor and oppressed barbarism, superstition and ignorance. Modernity is a cap superimposed upon the Middle Ages, which always remain." The Persians ruled but the Persian society changed into the newer moulds carrying with them a tincture of Greek and Roman blood. What race upon this earth carries in its veins the singular blood of its ancestors? But every race, every nation is a mingled single of generations that nature steadily bears in her womb. The essence remained as Parsi—Achaemenian, Ashkanian, Parthian—but the external forms changed to keep the inner kernel alive and flourishing from one stage of time to another.

VOLOGASES

Vologases the last of the great Parthians, came into power (A.D. 57) and during his 27 years of rule revived not only the political ascendancy of Persia, but also the power of the Zoroastrian faith. His contemporary was the celebrated Nero who ruled Rome to her fall in flames. Vologases offered double battle to the inveterate foe on all sides. The Romans realised the power and valour of the Parthians and extended a hand of peace and friendship, which lasted reasonably long. The Pehelavi term for Vologases is Valkhash, which is immersed in literary gold in the history of the age.

In the later period of the dynasty, internecine quarrels for throne or for territory—the not uncommon heritage of the time—softened the strong bones of the country built to power and position, into total weakness, till at last, the Roman warrior, Trajan, found in the situation, his opportunity to rise to strength. Khusrao the last of the princes worth naming, lost the Parthian peace. After Khusrao's death (A.D. 130) the Parthians and the Romans under Hadrian, had varying successes and defeats, till at last Valkhash III and Marcus Aurelius fought out between them the final battles of existence as sovereign power. As Parthia descended to ruin, and Rome and her parts scattered themselves to flagrant self-destruction, each merely could plan the fall of the other; the vigour of manliness and bravery of spirit gave place to total down-fall of both the empires.

The Parthian centre queered with light and power for no less than about 500 years, and the Ashkanians ended leaving

a new force in Persian history to carry forward the fire of Zoroastrian thought, feeling and even sovereign power.

Decline and decay are the lot of states, countries, empires. We grow, we ripe, and we then rot. How well has a German philosopher referred to such decline and fall in reference to the West! "You are dead. I see in you all the typical stig-mata of decay. Your institutions, your democracy, your corruption, your gigantic cities, your science, your art, your socialism, your atheism, your philosophy, even your mathematics are precisely those that characterized the dying stages of ancient states." Verily, perhaps the "ancient states" the learned author had in mind, were Greek, Roman, and even Ashkanian.

Time restlessly marches on, and after the fall of the Parthians there arose once again the same Persian race on the line of evolution with Sassan on its crest. History is circular; everything that goes up must come down. Do we progress when one class of rule, one group of rulers pass away giving place to another? Civilisations progress; human thought improves; men and women change. Yet, progress is but the surface turbulence of a sea, which in its depths is changeless and still. From Parthians once again the Iranian race leaps forward to life and action, to progress and civilisation. It is new leadership, inspired with newer science of war and peace. Zoroastrianism fills the vacant space with regenerate strength, and a new time disposes the mind and heart of the earth. "What is, has been and will be. Only fashions change." They changed, but the reality remained. The stern foot-hold of Iran that was, in centuries gone by, revived with the breath of Babak, the Sassanian chieftain.

Was it all chance that dethroned monarchies and restored them to life and activity in the process of time? Wrote Frederick the Great "The older one becomes, the more is one persuaded that His Sacred Majesty, Chance, does 3/4ths of the work of this miserable universe." If human life itself is chance, how can it not be believed that the rise and fall of empires is also but chance?

SASSANIAN EMPIRE

Firdausi has been with us all through the past dark ages of history and he has guided the pen of even the mightiest

among writers. With the Achaemenians, history began to write in stone, and it continued till later days until the heroic period of the Sassanians terminated so late as the times of Yazde-zard the last monarch of the dynasty. When European scholars like Rawlinson, Sykes, and others began to interest themselves in mid-Asian problems after the fall of the Arabs they read out to the world true facts in history about the Persians, that were ruffled in the times of reckless Mohammedan rule. Rawlinson went from mountain to mountain and scoured hills and plains and presented to the world the Sassanian empire—the glory and greatness of a mighty mid-age. Rawlinson investigated the cuneiform science of the Romans in order to substantiate his questioned gurus.

Sassanian Iran extended over 15 lakhs of square miles, with Caucasus in the north, the Indus in the east, the African continent in the south, and Asia Minor in the west. Kermania—the Garden of Iran. Gadrusia, Drangiana, modern Khorasan, Tabristan, Mazandaran—the Paradise of the Earth—Media with Hamadan as its capital, Susiana or modern Khuzistan, and Balkh Bami—the Land of Fortune—and last but not least, Armenia,—these formed the major soul of Sassanian prosperity, both economic and political. Add to these, Mesopotamia, Iberia, now known as Georgia, Colchis, Kurdistan, and Albania, and you have the unbounded geography of the Sassanian period, one of world's greatest in history. Fruits, vegetables, wine, grain grew in abundance and fed an unquestionably large race that established, besides conquest and kingdom, literature, arts, science and other advanced forms of civilisation.

The language changed from Zend Avesta to Pehelavi Pazard. What religious writings Zarathushtra had left behind and were preserved in the Libraries of Persepolis were burnt to ashes by Alexander in an indulgent moment of drink and vice with a leud paramour. It is stated by some historians that he bore in him Iranian blood from his mother's side. And when his coffin was being taken for final rites he had both his hands hanging outside empty to show to the world the emptiness of human life. Zarathushtra wrote 21 Nuskas or chapters dealing with such subjects as Prayer, Good and Evil, Earth, Air, Water, Sky, even Agriculture, descending into social and political philosophy. The Nuskas containing the whole of the Iranian

wisdom have been lost to us. The Sassanians revived the lost gems from what nook and corner they could be obtained, and where they found the channel deep and grave they bridged it with the new scheme of thought of their own.

The Persian soil has ever remained sacred to the Persians. Born of the soil, the Mazdayasnians, have had a varying change of life and death. They expelled the conquerors, after they lost the battle at the hand of the conquerors who occupied their soil. Repetition of this truth once again occurred when the Sassanians drove out the Parthians in occupation of the country, under Ardashir who defeated the Parthian chief Ardwan. Sassan was of the fourth descendency after the royal member of the Achaemenian line, who had left for India in safety. This Sassan was married by Babak to his daughter to bring about a political union between the house of Parthia and the house of Sassan.

ARDASHIR-E-BABAKAN

Ardashir, the son of Babak's daughter, initiates a new heroic period in the Persian history, for, brave like the great Cyrus, he was also like him, the child of fortune, so that when he and his followers began to rise in power and possessions, his enemy Parthia languished and her sons weakened themselves to ruin at last. Ardashir had a hard time of it quelling rebellions in which the Romans played a very great part. Thereupon, Ardashir invaded Syria ruled by Severus the Roman emperor, and drove him off beyond the western boundaries of Asia. The Romans had placed puppets in Syria, in Armenia and other places, all of whom lost at the hand of Ardashir. His was a troubled rule (226 A.D.—240) for he had to replace the crown upon the glory that had vanished, by demolishing the heads that had falsely put it on in the name of Iran and the Iranians. He resuscitated in the territories he had won back, the sacred dictates of Zoroastrianism, and revived the creed where it had decayed. In matters of internal administration he followed mainly the line of the Achaemenians. Satraps or viceroys were appointed to govern the provinces; military education became compulsory so as to strengthen the hands of the State in matters of defence. Judges were nominated under his special direction so that strict principles of justice could be

carried out without any obstacle from any party in the management of the government. He further took up the cause of the agriculturists so as to advance production for the people.

SHAHPOOR I

Shahpoor, the immediate successor of Ardashir, was born in a sequestered place as a result of family treachery, and nursed to youth and life in hard circumstances, effected greater conquests over Rome than even his predecessor. He lowered the Roman flag at Mesopotamia by defeating the Roman prince Gordian, and before the latter was assassinated, Shahpoor restored Nisibis, Antiochus and the adjoining territories to Iran, till at last Philip sought peace. The world of Europe was then in the throes of a political upheaval, on the crest of which came up the Roman chieftain Valerian whose peace offers to Shahpoor were not acceptable to him, and Shahpoor resolved to advance further until he reached the eastern parts of Greece. Silecia, Cappadocia, Asia Minor, Tarsus fell an easy prey to his victorious hand, so that the Roman rulers of the day deemed sagacity to be the better part of valour, and Odinatius of Palmyra presented tributary arms to King Shahpoor.

The Sassanian archeology and cuneiform knowledge traced to the age of which we are speaking, declare Shahpoor to be over-strict towards his conquered foe: but history regarded it and times demanded it. In his defence of Zoroastrianism he had to suppress with an iron hand the rising creed of Manichaeism, (the gospel of Mani, a painter by vocation, and a Christian convert), which may correspond to modern socialism on its economic side, and freedom of will and worship, on the religious. The ideology propagated by Mani seriously clashed with the settled prevalence of the principles both of the faith and the economic and political policy of the State; and when the empire was in the building how could Shahpoor not put his firm foot down upon the new heresies perhaps leading to confusion and malpractices in the country? Shahpoor consulted the Priests of the day before transporting Mani out of the country. But the Christianity that had penetrated Manichaeism was too powerful an element for the new age throbbing in Iran, and the foothold acquired by Mani developed into a broad phase,

until Behram the successor of Shahpoor executed the "Prophet" as Mani claimed to be, of a new faith.

Again a moment of peaceless and adverse internecine strife set in both among the Iranians and the Romans, and the two conflicting powers rivalled with each other for supremacy, sometimes the one and at others the other, holding mastery. Carus the Roman chief, dragged his followers as far as Mesopotamia. He failed due to the assassination of the chief at the hand of his own men. Armenia, the remarkable conquest of Ardashir-e-Babak, was lost to the Iranians after half a century of dominance under Iran. Even the Chinese feature as a factor in Asia to be accounted during the reign of Behram who gave shelter to Mango, the Chinese chief, when he escaped to Iran.

Narsi the successor of Behram, defeated Galerius the Roman prince in three battles, and got back the territories lost by Behram. The social commixture of the Iranians with the Greeks continued far into the successors of Narsi, namely, Hormaz and Shahpoor II.

SHAHPOOR II

Shahpoor on his accession, changed the capital from Madain to Istakhr, and during his long rule of 70 years. (A.D. 309-379) revived the lost power and prestige of the Iranians. Besides the European invaders, Shahpoor had to face another enemy of the State in the person of the Arabs, who as a growing race proved to be an inveterate foe of Iran. Taher, the Arab chief, was driven far into Yemen, and then Shahpoor "Zulkitaf" crossed over to Arabia to offer straight fight to the Arabs.

The Christians spared no time to do away with Shahpoor's mastery by raising revolts against him wherever possible, and Shahpoor had to deal with them accordingly. Constantine the founder of the famous town of Constantinople, (Istanbul), prepared for invasion of Iran, and Shahpoor girded up his loins to meet the Romans in one more battle. Mesopotamia and other provinces west of Syria fell to the conquering strength of the Persian king. He advanced as far as Singara, and before he could finish with the Roman chapter, Shahpoor had an urgent call of duty in his own home

country to drive away the Huns, a wild and savage tribe, known as the Massagates in the Achaemenian times. Shahpoor had the ill fate of not having faithful friends and colleagues, who sometimes due to intermarriage with the Romans and at others, satisfaction of political ambitions, resigned patriotism for a mess of pottage; yet Shahpoor held his own bravely, and drove away the Romans beyond the borders of Asia. Julian the successor of Constantine, was driven away beyond the hills of Samara, till at last Jovian who succeeded Julian sought peace with Shahpoor. After him came Valence, and war again began with Persia lasting for no less than 5 years ending in peace favourable to Shahpoor whereafter he died, leaving a glorious tradition behind him of security for his country, defence of his religion and mercy towards the foe. Shahpoor's coins indicate on the reverse side fire burning with Parsee priests standing in worship, which goes to show how devoted he was to the cult of Zoroastrianism, whose cause he greatly advanced.

NAOSHIRWAN THE JUST

After a lull of a brief period during which weak monarchs swayed the destinies of Iran, came the era of Behram-e-Goor—Behram who loved the game of killing the wild boar, about whom the poet Omar Khayyam has a happy reference. Behram developed the arts of farming and agriculture, while battling still with his enemies. Shankar, the Hindu prince refused to pay the usual tribute to Behram, and India had to be invaded. During the succeeding reigns of Yezde-zard, Phiruz, Palash, and Kobad, great and mighty were the wars fought with the Romans, with the result that a balance of power was brought about between the contending foes. The extended region to the west of Iran became the centre of fight for rivalry in which neither party could claim victory definitely. Iran had to battle on many fronts, until Khusrü I, Naosherwan afterwards known as Naosherwan-e-Adel, (the Prince of Justice) resolutely suppressed Roman and Arab savagery by fighting decisive battles on one hand and building a reign of peace on the other. When Lazica fell with Johannes, Iran extended beyond the Black Sea. Gibbon, the famous historian, depicts these brave conquests in a highly picturesque encomium, for when no less a prince than the great

Justinian sought peace with Iran, the latter sailed on the apex of world glory. Dagisthius, the Roman chief, made desperate effort to drive the Iranians back to their previous occupations, but Petra the stronghold of Iran on the border of the Black Sea, could not be won back. Naosherwan used to employ even non-Iranian commanders to lead his armies against the enemies of Iran—so effectively just was his administration. Contemporaneously, the Turkish nation arose south of the Jagzartes under their leader Bertazina who had spread the Turkish authority as far as Mongolia, China and Kamaschatka on the east, to the sea of Azov in the west. Disabul, the successor of Bertazina, thought wisdom to be the better part of valour, and sought peace with Naosherwan much to the displeasure of the Romans, the one time allies of the Turks. The Arabs, a rising race as noted above, also similarly sought alliance with Naosherwan against the combined conspiracy of the Christians and the Abyssinians. Realising the power of Naosherwan, the Romans under their king Justin, signed terms of peace paying tribute to the Persians. But the Romans did not long continue harmonious relations with the conquerors who found themselves without a great and good leader, when Naosherwan died, leaving the empire on shoulders too weak to carry on with the burden. Naosherwan's reign is remarkable for the introduction of large-scale agricultural improvements, encouragement to trade and industry, freedom of worship and system of justice by which even the humblest could find total removal of oppression at the hand of officials. He also founded numerous schools and colleges for advancement of education and learning. To him is due the foundation and progress of medicinal science and literature in their various aspects. The immortal Tales of Kalileh and Damneh by Pilpai or Bidpai, which contain all worldly philosophy, were written under his patronage. He held religious and philosophical discussions in conferences of sages and savants that gathered from as far regions as India and China, which were led by the great wise man of the court, Buzarjameher. The game of chess was first introduced in his reign.

KHUSRAO PARVIZ

Of the successors of Naosherwan, none shines so brightly as Khusräo Parvüz (590—628, A.D.) who ruled a period of

turmoil, but left an undying legacy to the world in the form of music as science, of art and of culture. The Takhte Taqdis was a unique carving of a throne that depicted colourful changes as the sun entered different stages of time in the day. The great sculptor, Farhad lived during his reign—Farhad's love for Khusrao's wife Shirin has been recorded in Persian history as that of Majnoon for Laila and Vamen for Uzra and even that of Romeo for Juliet so remarkably dramatized by Shakespeare. In the successive periods of Kobad, Ardashir III and Yazdegerd Sheheriar, a deep darkness of anarchy prevailed, until the uncheckable rise of the Arab Muslim power under Khaleef Abubakra set at naught any effort on the part of the Iranians to stand on their own. Varying fate made sometimes victor of the Iranian, and at others of the Muslim Arab, until at last the latter under Sa'ad-bin-Abu Vakkas encamped near Quadasia, a village on the border of Nadjaf rivulet, A.D. 636, and defeated the Persians who lost their ever-conquering standard—Kavayami Daraish—at the hand of the Arabs. Not satisfied with this, the Arabs achieved one more victory at Nehavand, south of Hamadan, where Yazdegerd lost the remnant of the Persian empire, and himself became a victim of treacherous murder at the hand of the ruler of Merv where he was taking shelter to recoup his lost army. The Arabs waited in Deputation upon Yazdegerd with a view to persuading him to submit to the Muslim government; but the last of the Persian heroes proudly refused even to drink a draught of water from the hands of the Deputationists and resigned himself to the will of God. The Arabs thereafter became the masters of Iran, and there they are for the last 1300 years and more, with ruination of all that made Iran the glory and greatness of the world in the days of Shahpoor and Naoshirwan and Khusrao Parviz. The chastity of Parsee womanhood is best illustrated by Khatun Banoo, and Meher Banoo—two daughters of Yazdegerd—who instead of submitting to the conquering will of the Muslims, sought shelter, the former in Haft Ajar—the home of their ancestors—and the latter in Gorab. The "burzigar"—farmer cheerfully sat down to milk the cow for the royal princess, but the cow kicked and the milk was spilt on the ground, and Khatun Banoo deeply disappointed at Nature's adverse force prayed to Ahura Mazda to receive her back and the story runs that a chasm opened wide and Khatun disappeared. The place is even today revered by the term—"Dar-e-Din"

in Akda near Yazd. And so did also Meher Banoo. Dar-e-Din was for long the place of pilgrimage for Persians where cows were slaughtered annually in revenge for the ill deed of the burzigar's cow; and it was Manakji Hantaria who with the help of leading Parsees of Bombay, like Meherwanji Panday, Manakji Patel, Manakji Petit, Kharshedji Cama, Dinshaw Petit, got the killing of the cows stopped and a tomb raised at the place, with the co-operation of the Persian government. Similar memorial was raised at Koh-e-Chakmaku in honour of Hayat Banoo, a third daughter of the last unfortunate Prince of Persia, Yazdegerd.

EXODUS TO INDIA

Muslim fanaticism dictated Islam on the unwilling and unsubdued soul of the Iranians; some weakly submitted, many resisted and met with capital punishment for their honour, for their religion, some found asylum in hidden caves and caverns, some made honourable terms of peace to live in the land itself collectively in the island of Ormuz; but some drifted their eyes to the benign and benevolent land of the Hindus from where deputations of good will had often arrived in Persia at the invitation of her princes. We, Parsees, almost a lakh in number, are the descendents of those refugees—handful in number, energetic in spirit, loyal to the State and friends of all humanity. In the absence of means of travel and transport that modern times extend to us, what misery, what distress, what hardships, the founders of the Indian Parsee community must have borne. The first refugees landed at Diu and then settled at Sanjan where Rana Jadhav of blessed memory, welcomed them—on the borders of Bombay, in Gujarat, the first settlement of Parsees in India. Some are also supposed to have entered India by the northern door; but we were never unwelcome anywhere for we promised to loyally stand by the country and the king. Surely, when the Gujarat princes had to fight with the Muslims, the Parsees fought along with the Hindus shoulder to shoulder in defence of India and her rich possessions. "Fear not, O Prince, on account of this army; all of us are ready to scatter the heads of thy foes; and we will fight as long as a drop of blood remains in our veins." So said Ardashir Kotewal, the chief of the Parsee soldiers. The invasion of Mohammed Shah

Toghlak was repelled by the Hindus largely with the help of the brave Persians that had found protection in this land (1348). The varying fortunes of war with the Muslim conquerors, led the Parsees to scatter themselves all along the western coast-line of India, and though we spread as distant as Dehra Doon and Delhi our main settlement developed in Gujarat, with Surat as our trading and industrial centre, and Naosari as the religious main-land.

WITH AKBAR

During the reign of Akbar we gained access to the Muslim Darbar when Dastoor Meherji Rana imparted Zoroastrian tenets to the free-thinking prince and the latter in return acknowledged the greatness of the Parsee race by allowing them large pieces of land whereon to build the foundations of the community's prosperity. We began to settle some of our internal disputes among ourselves as regards our religious ceremonies, our calendar, and our social restraints. We must therefore, consult our original remnants at Khorasan in Iran; and holy persons who could ardently suffer for the purity of their faith visited our birth-place and brought back knowledge contained in the celebrated Revayets, that unfolded the original doctrines on which we were to be guided in the hour of our straying away, or of dispute. Dhanjisha Manjisha, Changa Asa, Kama Vorah, Asphandiyar Sohrab, Kaus Kama, Kamdin Shahpoor, Kaus Mahiyar are some of the noteworthy names round which centres this remarkable period of our intellectual and spiritual growth and clarification.

Nariman Hushang was the first to visit Persia to enquire what ceremonies were needed to keep in tact the whole Parsee fold. Kama Asa followed him in 1527, and brought with him for our study and illumination Ardevrat Nameh from Persia. Behmen Aspandiar, (1626) another visitor produced Vishtasp Yesht, Visparad, which enabled us to see the light for us. These and others greatly reduced the ceremonial feuds that once became the serious promoters of schism in us.

BRITISH ERA

With the dawn of British era, the Parsees expanded themselves rapidly, as they found in the new age an opportunity

for their inherent talents—commercial, industrial, and intellectual. They divided themselves into two unnecessary factions—Kadmis and Shehenshahis—during the Kabisa quarrel in which some of the most thoughtful members of the community were grossly involved. The Persian calendar laid down 360 days of the year and added 5 Gatha days, making up the total of 365. They also added at the end of every 120 years one month calculating the movement of the sun by an addition of 5 hours and 54 seconds. In India those who stood by the addition—Kabisa, got the name of Kadmis, while others who rejected this mathematical quiddity, were dubbed Shehenshahis. Both the sects even today differ by a month's period, so that while the Kadmis have their New Year in August the others have it in September. But in the new age we are living in, we rarely reckon the difference, so tightly is the skein of the community wrapped.

When the East India Company laid its stronghold in Surat the British found in the Parsees a highly intelligent race whose services could be utilised in various directions. They found in the Wadias excellent master-builders of ships (for trade in those early days was carried on in sailing ships), in the Pandays and Patels industrious developers of towns and villages, in the Dubashees and Dalals rich contractors and brokers of business in every article on a very large scale. The Parsee found in the new regime a wide scope for the exercise of his genius in all directions, so that Jamahedjee Jeejeebhai founded a huge business in China, the Banajis in Bengal, the Sheths in Bombay, the Petjis in Bombay and in towns of Gujarat. It was an heroic period for the Parsees some of whom travelled over to England to acquire knowledge of arts and industries. Not that the Parsee was a favoured race, for the British entertained a sense of equality and justice for all—but that the Parsee found a new freedom for all the latent powers he had brought with him to this country as a heritage from the land of his birth.

Safe and free in India, between 1750 and 1850 and onwards, we achieved some of the glories and prosperities we justly deserved as a constructive people in the land of our adoption. Cambay, Deesa, Ahmedabad in Gujarat, Thana, Ahmednagar, Poona etc. in the Deccan, soon began to become

principal stations of our business, trade and industry. The British admired the great lead we were giving to other communities in the country, and emulated the examples set by us to them so that they too, could advance their social and economic benefits. Our adaptability to newer British environments infused in us their way of life. Reforms in various directions sometimes created in us disputes, splitting us up into two vast camps,—orthodox and reformers, which without harming the essence of our belief, antagonised a part against the majority.

The Parsee earned from the land to give it back an hundred-fold, so that the grand charities showered on the country by the Jeejeebhais, the Jehangirs, the Banajis, the Camas, the Patels, the Pandays, left a permanent impress upon the popular mind that did not fail to utter the oft-repeated verdict—"Parsee! thy name is charity."

The rich possession of the sacred grounds of our Towers of Silence at Malabar Hill can be historically traced to a statement made by Dr. Fryer in 1671, as follows:—"On the other side of the great Inlet to the sea is a great point abutting against Old Woman's Island, and is called Malabar Hill. *** on the top of all is a Parsee tomb lately raised!" The first Tower of Silence was built by Hirji Wachha, an ancestor of the modern Wachagandhis.

PANCHAYAT

One of the main features of Hindu caste government was government by a Panch, i.e. Five Elders. Our association with the new hosts demanded that we, too, should have a Panchayat to settle our communal questions and further our communal interests. Therefore, leading families like, Banaji, Jamshedjee Jeejeebhoy, Patel, Panday, Cama and others organised the Parsee Panchayat, which was given later legal authority by William Hornby, Governor of Bombay, the principal strong-hold of the Parsees, to exercise even force upon those members of the community, who proved recalcitrant, (1778). The first lawfully constituted Panchayet functioned from 1-1-1787 and besides maintaining the funds donated by the more philanthropic members of the community, the Panchayet reservedly exercised

communal control over the Parsees in general. Then came the Parsee Law Commission, (1852) presided over by Arnold, and instituted by Sir Erskin Perry the famous Bombay judge, at the instance of Borradaile—all noble and sympathetic "Topiwallas" who set the community going on the firm basis of unchallengeable law.

Similar were the appreciations made by the British in various fields of public activity, so that at the instance of Khan Sahib D. D. Khambatta and Pudumji Pestanji the Parsees were first introduced in Volunteer military service. They formed the celebrated Poona Volunteer Corps, noted for its successful career in various British campaigns. And the British were amply rewarded for their reposing confidence in the loyalty of the community; to quote an instance, Sergeant Nimuchwalla having proved the sharpest marksman was appointed a high officer in the British training camp during the First World War, (1914). We had our differences with the same Government, for during the regime of Governor Phillip Wodehouse we were misapprehensively persecuted on the ground that we started a communal riot against the Muslims. It was a terrible ordeal and the Parsee leaders with Sir Jamshedjee Jeejeebhoy at the head settled the issue amicably. Two riots—1, cause, killing of dogs by Government wounding the religious susceptibilities of our Hindu brethren; 2, cause, Jehangir Gandhi's translation of an English essay on Mohammed offending the religious feelings of the Muslims—could bring to light the physical stamina of the Parsees comparable to that of any other in the country.

ZOROASTRIAN IRANIS

After the fall of our Empire, many of our ancestors lived in secrecy, on mountain tops and in the heart of the wilderness. They kept alive the Zoroastrian faith.

Such Zoroastrian Iranis in Khorassan, the cream of Persian life and character, as were left behind to suffer for the preservation of some of the sanctities of the race, must be saved; and accordingly, a Zoroastrian Amelioration Society was set afoot under the ardent and benevolent supervision of Manakji Petit, assisted by Manakji Hantaria and cordially supported by

the British ambassadors in the court of Teheran. This Society freed the Persian Parsees from the unholy and tyrannic tax called the Jazia or capitation tax imposed by the Muslim kings upon us in Persia simply for holding different religious principles from what the Muslims did.

Though extirpated as a race by imprudent violence of Muslim fanaticism, our Zoroastrian blood refused to be penitently dried up in the veins of springing youth. Yazd, Kerman, and Teheran harboured numbers of essentially Zoroastrian men, women and children, with Islamic assumption compelled upon them by force of economic circumstances. In the course of last 100 years many of the Zoroastrians from Iran came to India and more particularly to Bombay. Having settled themselves there with the help of the local Parsis, they seriously thought of bettering the lot of those left behind at Yazd and at Kerman.

Under the leadership of the late Mr. Pestonji Curshetti Irani and the late Mr. Dinshaw Jeejeebhoy, the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman of Bombay was established. In its initial stage it received such encouragement and inspired so much confidence that larger numbers of Iranians who settled in Bombay came forward with money and moral support to help this institution in order to extend help to their co-religionists in Iran.

Mr. Pestonji Dossabhoy Marker opened schools and set afoot an orphanage at Yazd and Mr. Gustad Khodadad charitably established a maternity home. Others of smaller means did their bit towards the uplift of their co-religionists.

This activity of three decades ago roused the keen conscience of Indian Parsees who afterwards formed the Iran League to render all academic service possible to Iran as a country in general and to our brothers and sisters particularly in Iran. We have thus raised a central monumental communal structure in Iran, the land of our abandonment to restrain Iran destiny from totally uprooting us, and between that country and India a regular channel of mutual assistance has been beneficially opened up. These thousands might some time in the history of mankind, usher in an effective revolution in human thought in co-operation with

the Parsees of India. They are more rapidly modernised than their Indian confreres, which is noteworthy in as much as the efforts of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman may be said to be bearing ample fruits.

OUR PATRIOTISM

Besides building numerous Educational and Medical establishments all throughout the country, and contributing a major share towards the uplift of the poor and backward members of the Indian society, without any consideration of caste, creed or community, we shared the hardest battles of Self-Government for the country on constitutional lines, and in that connection the names of Dadabhai Naoroji—the political Guru of Mahatma Gandhi—and of Pherozeshah Mehta, the founder of civic self-government in India will be for ever remembered. In fact, the Parsees were the pioneer founders of the Indian National Congress, and out of their teachings took the sound birth of all constitutional political agitation in favour of Swaraj—first propagated by Dadabhai, later picked up by other sections of the Indian community.

We decorate today the past pages of India's heroic period. Go where you will and the name of Parsee in any field of life will erupt to crown the glory of the race.

The Parsee is not a quantity apart from the whole of the flowing national life. He may roam the world; but his home is this country. Therefore, he has to adapt himself to the political environments that emerge from day to day to the general advantage of the country as a whole. The new world in the making is not for shirkers. Who dares, he alone can do.

No Parsee as such, has disowned the originality of his faith so far, though with regard to its observance, opinions have differed. But that is the psychological wave that is sweeping past the whole world. The belly makes the society; and the Parsee of today would do well in scouring seas and exploring mountains to fill his belly by the might of his righteous arm. There is in him ingrained the virtue of efficiency, if only he cultivate his talent in the proper direction.

Though old in years, this country is new in age. It is a magnificent field in which to struggle only to succeed. Full of conflicts though we may be, a harmony can be evolved leading to unity of purpose. Keep aloof and you cry yourself to ruin. Mix with the crowd and the Parsee leads to victory. The Parsee is still a true patriot, of which the Government are fully warned. The Parsee hates no one. He has lived down into ages with this outlook upon life. He is strong, (vir fortis), and therefore, hates no one. He strives to conceive things as they are in themselves, and to remove the obstacles to true knowledge, which arises from hatred, anger, envy, mockery, pride etc. He has all along broken the traditional chains of communalism—in fact, that is the social history of the Parsee wherever he has been; and the State owes not a little to the Parsee for pointing the way and adorning the tale of social freedom in this our country of rejuvenated manhood. Order within leads to success without; and the Parsee must set his house in order—every home an independent entity—and the country's crown will be set on his head. The essence of democracy—education—is his universal privilege; he has to man the tide of vast millions—educated and otherwise—that may attempt to elbow him out, in competence and sufficiency. He is a devoted servant of the country and as such he must live through the future as, as such he has lived in the past.

The whole world has been opened out to him since the country's Independence he too, has fought for; and now through this country to conquer the world should be his masterly ambition—neither by vice nor by evil—the antagonists of his Prophet, but, by the magnitude of his intellectual vigour and the divine force of his spiritual adventure. He must hold fast to the religion of his fathers! It is the sacred torch that must fire his soul in every one of his acts and in every one of his thoughts.

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